1: Gillin E-5 (1932-33)1936 SR9 Carib SR9

account for its silent end, its resounder, and its generally Spanish name."[1]

The second type of musical instrument is the fiddle. Recently traders in the area have stocked cheap European violins, which the natives have bought with alacrity and strung with cotton thread. The home-made type of fiddle is, however, constructed from bamboo, as illustrated in Roth,[2] or is made from congo-pump, a soft grainless wood which springs up in abandoned clearings. All types of fiddles are strung with three cotton strings, the tones of which depend not upon their texture but upon their length and tautness. The home-made fiddle is about two feet long by about three inches wide. It is provided with pegs, bridge, and tail. In playing it, the Carib holds the tail against the shoulder rather than under the chin. It is a mistake to believe that these instruments are merely playthings used for making some sort of indiscriminate noise. The Carib tunes are studied carefully, and the public is quick to criticize inaccuracies on the part of a virtuoso.

The third type of instrument is the bone flageolet. This is usually made of the tibia of the tibisiri deer. A hole is made in the anterior margin of the superior epiphysis and shaped with mani gum, so that the stream of air is directed against the sharp edge of the anterior wall of the shaft. Three holes are provided at regular intervals. The sounds thus produced seem to harmonize, to an untrained ear at least, with those produced by the native fiddle. (See Plate 26, *b*).

Recently traders have introduced harmonicas or mouth organs into the region, and the Indians have taken them up with great energy. The mouth organ is at present, however, used only as a noise-making device, since the natives are as yet unable to master the harmonic scale.

Aside from songs sung to music, another form of literary effort common among the Caribs is story-telling. A number of folk tales are presented in our chapter on Myths. These comparatively formalized tales are told less frequently, however, than are extemporaneous yarns based upon personal experiences. At the end of each day, at home or on the river or the trail, the adults lie in their hammocks for some time before going to sleep and trade yarns. These are usually somewhat embellished and exaggerated

[1] Roth, 1924, *An Introductory Study of the Arts, Crafts, and Customs*, p. 467.
[2] Roth, 1924, *An Introductory Study of the Arts, Crafts, and Customs*, Fig. 230, B.

1: Gillin E-5 (1932-33)1936 SR9 Carib SR9

538 accounts of their experiences, and are drawn out to considerable lengths. While an individual is telling a story the listeners continually supply exclamations, a high pitched "ko-o?" or an "ao-o" with rising and falling inflection. The pattern is for listeners continually to express surprise, astonishment, and amazement at the words of the speaker. It is also customary to repeat "yao" and to grunt at frequent intervals as a means of encouraging the speaker and showing him that he is holding the listeners' attention. Speakers dramatize their material with gestures and tones of voice. Excitement or laughter grip the group as the story progresses to its climax. Most of these stories are, of course, utterly pointless in translation, but I believe that this type of story-telling can be regarded as the Carib equivalent of the drama.

[536]

RECKONING OF TIME

805 824 821 SPECIAL mention should be made of the Carib attitude toward the passage of time. No provision is made for reckoning the passing of the years, or for distinguishing one year from another, so that no one knows his exact age. The term for year is "siditcho," meaning "star," and referring to the seven stars of the Pleiades, which pass over the heavens once a year. Aside from these I have found little evidence of star lore among the Caribs. On the Barama it is said that one knows that the end of the year has come by noticing that certain wild fruits, such as the sawari nut, are ripe and are dropping to the ground. The present month is distinguished from the preceding and following ones by reference to the phases of the moon, but beyond this calculations seldom go.

211 805 When a man leaves home for a journey, he specifies the number of days he will be gone by giving to his wife a cord in which a knot has been tied for each day of his absence. The wife unties one of the knots each day that he is away, and expects him to return when the cord is finally knotless.[1]

The time of day is reckoned by the position of the sun. Thus, when asked how long will be required to reach a given point, an Indian will reply by pointing to the position which the sun will occupy when the destination has been reached.

[1] For the distribution of this device in South America, and its connection with the quipus of the Andean area, see Nordenskiöld, 1930, *Modifications of Indian Culture*.

1: Gillin E-5 (1932-33) 1936 SR9 Carib SR9

spirits have seized and eaten humans whenever they got the chance. 773 539

(Note: This bush spirit is apparently a sort of literary diety, whose name is not known to David, and whom the piaiyen cannot call to them. Upon being closely questioned David said that he had never seen this head man and did not know what his precise appearance was. But he insisted that this spirit, the headman of the bush, had "fixed everything." In fact he seems to be regarded somewhat as a creator of the world.[1] Upon being asked about the moon and the stars, David said that they were also included in the trials of strength, but once they got started they could not stop, and ever since have been going across the sky. What their nature is he does not know, but the headman fixed them up there. Regarding the phases of the moon, David says that the headman causes it to swell up and to get thin regularly so that men can keep track of the time as it passes. The boss spirit of the universe, managing executive as it were, is Komonakoto (same name, but not same identity as first medicine man). When a piaiyen has become well acquainted with all the other spirits he may succeed in establishing contact with Komonakoto, but he must have long and successful experience to be able to do this.) 538

13. The Primeval Race

A long time ago men did not know much about the animals, so the headman who made the world arranged a series of races in which all the animals were to compete: (1) climbing a mountain; (2) swimming a river; (3) climbing a tree. The tale then proceeds to describe in detail the actions of each of the bush animals in these respective tests, setting forth the Carib knowledge of wild animal behavior as they know it today. I omit these descriptions, which are common knowledge of all travellers who have familiarized themselves in the bush. According to the story, however, the mahm (Tinamou) was inefficient in all of these tests. The bush cow cannot swim well, so when confronted with the swimming test, he ducked under the water and walked across the river on the bottom. In the swimming test the sloth had difficulty in keeping afloat because he was continually breaking wind (laughter); the 773 539

[1] Cf. Roth, 1915, *Animism and Folk Lore*, Chap. I.